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## AMERICAN INDIAN LEGENDS AND BELIEFS ABOUT THE SQUIRREL AND THE CHIPMUNK.

OUR word *squirrel* is traced back to the Greek *skiouros*, which signifies literally "shadow tail," from *skia*, "shadow," and *oura*, "tail," and the bushy tail of the little creature has attracted the attention of other peoples than those of ancient Greece.

In Longfellow's "Hiawatha," the grateful hero sings:—

"Take the thanks of Hiawatha,  
And the name which now I give you;  
For hereafter and forever  
Boys shall call you *adjidaumo*  
*Tail in air* the boys shall call you."

Of Manabozho, or Nanabush, the demigod and culture-hero of the Chippeways and kindred Indian tribes, whose character and achievements Longfellow has mingled with those of the Iroquois patriot and statesman, Hiawatha, to produce the majestic figure of his great epic, the following legend is told (Emerson, "Indian Myths," p. 345):—

Once he was swallowed by the great fish, who gulped him down, canoe and all; but he was helped by a little animal, that, all unnoticed, had remained in the vessel. This was the squirrel, on whom Manabozho, in remembrance of his services, conferred the name *adjidaumo*.

The word, however, does not mean "tail in air," as the poet thought, but rather "head foremost," from the way in which the animal descends trees; "tail in air" is altogether too free a translation of the name, whose literal meaning in the Chippeway tongue is "mouth foremost."

Curiously enough, our familiar word *chipmunk*, as the earlier form, *chitmunk* (which occurs in Mrs. Traill's "Canadian Crusoes"), indicates, is a corruption of this Indian name *adjidaumo*, the final *o* of which is nasal,—the *k* at the end has been added by association with *monkey*, and the change of the *t* to *p* in the first syllable is accounted for by the "chipping" of the animal.

The Karok Indians of California say that in the beginning the human race was without the precious boon of fire. But the coyote (prairie-wolf), the bear, the squirrel, and the frog, managed to procure some from the two old hags in whose possession it was, and by passing the brand from one to another, to secure its reaching mankind. To this day the squirrel bears evidence of his venture, for the skin just above his shoulders was scorched, and the heat of the flame caused his tail to curl up over his back as we see it now. The Na-

vajo Indians, also, make the squirrel a sort of Prometheus, or fire-stealer of the prime. Their version is that it was the coyote, the bat, and the squirrel who procured fire for men, the last succeeding in bringing the sacred flame to the wigwams of the Indians after the other two (one after the other) had carried it as far as they could. (Powers, *Contr. N. Amer. Ethn.* vol. iii. p. 38.)

Mrs. Erminnie Smith has, among the numerous legends of the Iroquois Indians recorded by her, one in which the merry little chipmunk figures as a hero of light. This story, accounting for the dark line or stripe upon the animal's back, is as follows: Long, long ago, the porcupine, who was chief of all the animals in the world, called a council to determine whether there should be day and sunlight in the world, or only night and darkness. After a violent discussion had taken place, the chipmunk, who was in favor of day, began to sing: "The light will come; we must have light!" while the bear, who wanted it to be always night, sang: "Night is best; we must have darkness!" As the chipmunk continued to sing, the day began to dawn, whereupon some of the other animals became very angry. The bear ran after the chipmunk, who succeeded in escaping, but not without the huge paw of the bear passing over his back, as he entered a hole in a tree, and leaving the black stripe we see there to-day. (*Sec. Ann. Rep. Bur. Ethn.* p. 80.) The Cherokee Indians, whose language is related to that of the Iroquois, have a legend accounting for the stripes: After man had invented weapons, and began to hunt and kill the animals, birds, etc., the latter held a grand council to decide how to retaliate. After considerable discussion, it was determined that each of the creatures in question should visit upon man some disease or sickness; and this is why mankind is now subject to such afflictions. One alone, of all the animals, said he had no quarrel with man, and spoke against the retaliation proposed. This was the little ground-squirrel, whose action so incensed the other animals that they fell upon him and sought to tear him to pieces. He escaped, however, but bears the marks of the struggle to this very day. (*Mooney, Seventh Ann. Rep. Bur. Ethn.* p. 321.)

Among the Indians of Vancouver Island Mr. Lord heard a quaint story of the origin of the four stripes of the squirrel of the West: Once there was a terrible ogress who kidnapped children and ate them, for she was a fierce cannibal. An Indian woman, seeing her son about to be made away with by this creature, prayed to the gods that he might escape in some way or other. Her prayer was heard, and just as the ogress was making off with the child, the latter began to turn into a squirrel, and slipping through her hands, the pretty little creature scampered merrily off, but bears to this day on her

back the marks of the ogress' terrible claws. (Bancroft, Nat. Races, vol. iii. p. 52.)

Another legend of Manabozho tells why the squirrel "barks:" Once upon a time, Manabozho invited all the animals to a feast. When guests tried to eat the black-bear meat, cooked by his wife, they were, one and all, seized with a violent fit of coughing which they tried in vain to suppress. Manabozho, at last, angry at the great noise, turned them all into squirrels, and they are coughing yet. This is why "to this day the squirrel coughs or barks when any one approaches its nest." (Emerson, p. 412.)

The Shasta Indians of California have a legend that in the great Deluge all the animals perished except a huge squirrel, the size of a bear, which is still living on Mt. Wakwaynuma. The Micmacs of Nova Scotia say that once the squirrel was larger than the bear, but Glooskap, — the Manabozho of these Indians, — "took him in his hands, and, smoothing him down, he grew smaller and smaller till he "became as we see him now." When Glooskap was thinking of creating man, another legend tells us, he asked the squirrel what he would do if he saw a man coming. The squirrel replied: "I should climb a tree!" And since the appearance of man upon the face of the globe such has been the habit of this animal. The same Indians, in other stories, make the squirrel fight valiantly on the side of the great hero *Pulowech*, the partridge, in his contest with the great savage beast, the *Weisum*. (Leland, Alg. Leg. p. 29.)

Bryant has given us a characteristic sketch of this bright little animal:—

"The squirrel, with raised paws and form erect,  
Chirps merrily."

Some such figure was present to the mind of the primitive Delaware Indian who gave to the chipmunk the name which he bears in that language, *pochqwapiith*, the literal meaning of which is "he sits upright upon something." The ground-squirrel is called *anicus*, which also signifies "mouse," and January is known as *anixi gischuch*, "ground-squirrel month," because then these animals begin to run about. To the Delaware *anicus* (a diminutive of *anik*) seem to be related the Chippeway names for the "black squirrel," *misaniik* and *misaniko*. The "flying squirrel" is called in Chippeway *zhagaskan-dawe*, which means "the animal that moves as if flattened out." Sufficient has been given here to show that the squirrel and the chipmunk have their rôle in the mythology and folk-lore of our American aborigines, and to indicate briefly the nature of the interesting stories in which they figure.

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